



1 July 3, 2001

2 Express Mail Label No.: ET582225338US

PATENT

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UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

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of

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16 INVENTORS:

CONLY L. HANSEN, Ph.D.

17

A Citizen of the United States

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1310 East 3100 North

19

NORTH LOGAN, UTAH 84341

20

and

21

ED WATTS

22

A Citizen of the United States

23

1332 East 3100 North

24

NORTH LOGAN, UTAH 84341

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MACHINE FOR INJECTING LIQUIDS

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a machine for injecting liquids into materials having the consistency of foodstuffs.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

United States patent no. 5,053,237 of Deloy G. Hendricks and Conly L. Hansen provides an apparatus for the needleless injection of injectate into meat.

According to lines 33 through 40 in column 4 of that patent, "[A] nozzle injection apparatus causes the injectate to travel from a reservoir under pressure through a valve and out of a nozzle. Sufficient pressure must be provided such that the injectate can travel completely through the cut of met, if desired. At the same time, temperature controls must be provided so that the injectate leaves the nozzle at a temperature within a desired temperature range."

Lines 41 through 48 of column 6 and lines 3 through 26 of column 7 consistently explain: "... The injection apparatus 10 will, in most cases, include a temperature control feature, such as a water bath 12, for controlling the temperature of the fluid to be injected ("injectate"). The actual injectate fluid will be contained within reservoir 14 disposed within the confines of water bath 12. It is crucial that the temperature be controlled within certain ranges in order to provide for proper injection.

...

"The apparatus of the present invention also includes a pump 16 and an adjustable relief valve 18 or pressure control assembly. Thus, the injectate can be pumped in a controlled manner from the reservoir through a nozzle assembly 20.

"Also useful in the present apparatus is an electric solenoid valve 22, which may be placed in communication with an adjustable timer to control duration of the bursts of injectate. Thus, the volume of injectate can be carefully controlled as can the amount of injectate which leaves the system. This apparatus can then be connected to a starter and relay to operate the valve 22.

1 "The injection apparatus will include a nozzle assembly 20. The nozzle assembly will
2 function to direct the injectate in the proper direction and to maintain the stream of injectate at
3 the proper volume. The nozzle assembly 20 may include a plurality of individual nozzles 24.

4 "The various components of the apparatus are placed in fluid communication by lines
5 including recycle line 26, a feed line 28, and reservoir line 30.

6 "Finally, the apparatus illustrated in FIG. 9 includes an injection table 32 to provide
7 support for the meat being injected."

8 United States patent no. 6,165,528 of Yoshihiko Tanaka et al. discloses another apparatus
9 for the needleless injection of injectate into meat, which it terms a "pickle injector." This patent
10 asserts, on line 66 of column 9 through line 8 of column 10:

11 "The pickle injector of the invention is a device for injecting the liquid substance into the
12 green meat. The pickle injector is provided with a high-pressure liquid generator, a
13 liquid-substance injecting section, and a pressure controller which can control the injection
14 pressure while injecting the liquid substance when the liquid substance is injected from the
15 injecting section to the green meat.

16 "The high-pressure liquid generator in the pickle injector the invention may be any
17 mechanism, as long as it can increase the pressure of the liquid substance to a high level"

18 No recognition is given in patent no. 6,165,528 is given to the fact that the injectate will
19 be heated by passing through the pump and the pressure controller; nor is there any discussion
20 concerning reclaiming injectate that does not find its way into the meat.

21 The apparatus of patent no. 6,165,528 does, however, preferably employ a manifold, as
22 described in line 33 through 60 of column 10:

23 ". . . the high-pressure liquid substance is transferred from the high-pressure liquid
24 generator via the high-pressure piping to the injecting section, and it is preferable to use the
25 injecting section which has a member called a manifold for branching a single flow from the
26 high-pressure piping to plural flows. The manifold is preferably placed on the tip end of the
27 injecting section, but can be placed midway in the piping as the case may be.

28 "The injecting section of the conventional high-pressure liquid generator is of a
29 single-hole type or has a form in which the piping in the manifold is branched radially. The
30 present inventors have manufactured a manifold especially suitable for a pickle injector for meat,

1 piping in the manifold is branched and the branched pipes are parallelly arranged. Here, the
2 parallel arrangement includes not only the arrangement where the pipes are arranged parallel in a
3 row but also the arrangement where the pipes are arranged zigzag or parallel in multiple rows.
4 By arranging nozzles parallel, a nozzle interval can be narrowed to 10 mm or less, e.g., 5.6 mm
5 for injection. Therefore, a highly dense and uniform injection is feasible. Further preferably
6 used is a manifold which has multiple coherent stream injection nozzles arranged parallel in this
7 manner.

8 "When the manifold is used, the high-pressure liquid substance is injected as the coherent
9 stream from the nozzle on the tip end of each piping. The liquid substance is injected
10 simultaneously from the parallel arranged nozzles to the green meat. . . ."

11 Subsequently, patent no. 6,165,528 explains, in lines 44 through 47 of column 17, "The
12 liquid substance is injected as a coherent stream from the tip end of the injection nozzle of the
13 manifold 7 in contact with the green meat." Thus, the nozzle actually touches the meat, creating
14 an increased risk of contamination.

15 In lines 42 through 45 of column 18, similar language describes another embodiment.
16 Also for this other embodiment, however, lines 34 through line 36 of column 18 indicate, "The
17 manifold 7 is . . . lowered from above to hit against the green meat."

18 Although in lines 10 through 11 of column 17 and in line 16 of column 18, patent no.
19 6,165,528 states that high-pressure piping 6 is "constituted of a flexible hose," no purpose is
20 given for this flexibility. Thus, it is logical to assume that the flexibility is for the traditional
21 purpose in high-pressure lines, viz., absorbing forces associated with the pressure that could
22 damage a more rigid line.

23 Finally, in its Description of the Related Art, patent no. 6,165,528 provides a summary of
24 needleless injectors and related devices.

25 To the best of the inventors' knowledge, all previous needleless injectors have utilized
26 pumps, such as positive displacement pumps, which must run continuously in order to maintain
27 the fluid to be used as an injectate under constant high pressure. Heat generated by such
28 continuous operation is transferred to the injectate as it passes through the pump.

29 Moreover, in the practical implementation of United States patent no. 5,053,237, once the
30 pressure in the system reached the desired level, a pressure relief valve 18 would prevent the

1 continuously running pump 16 from further raising the pressure. This was accomplished by
2 allowing the injectate to flow from the pump 16, through the pressure relief valve 18, and back to
3 the reservoir 14 that supplied the pump 16 with injectate. A solenoid valve 22 allowed the
4 injectate to flow to the nozzles 24 of the nozzle assembly 20 when desired. The re-circulation of
5 the injectate through the continuously running pump 16 tended to raise the temperature of the
6 injectate even more.

7 Not only is a cooling system necessary to keep the injectate within the required
8 temperature range, but the added volume in plumbing necessary to provide the recycling and the
9 additional capacity within the reservoir 14 to account for the injectate that is being cooled within
10 the water bath 12 requires a greater quantity of injectate than would otherwise be necessary.
11 This, in turn, mandated the use of a larger pump 16. More energy was required both because of
12 the larger capacity of the pump 16 and because of the continuous operation. And since injectate
13 is purged when it is desired to use another fluid as the injectate, the cost of injectate was higher.
14

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present inventors recognized the preceding disadvantages of the systems in the prior art and developed a needleless injection apparatus that utilizes one or more commercially available air booster pumps. Such a pump generates less heat by operating only when necessary to maintain a desired pressure.

The Machine also employs a head which preferably, but not necessarily, has injectate introduced into the head through apertures in the walls of a hollow tube inside the head that is in fluid communication with the air booster pump. The head has apertures for one or more nozzles. The apertures are preferably, but not necessarily, preferably, but not necessarily, designed so that an input end of the nozzle lies within the head at a point with enough distance to the interior of the wall of the head that any particles within the injectate will tend to fall to a level below the input end of the nozzle and not enter and thereby clog the nozzle.

The head is preferably, but not necessarily, designed so that upon installation one point of the inside of the head will be at substantially the highest elevation. Near such point the head has an escape aperture so that any gas within the injectate that enters the head will tend to flow to and through such escape aperture. Furthermore, a return line preferably, but not necessarily, takes injectate that flows through the escape aperture to the low-pressure side of the air booster pump. And also, a drain, in a work surface to which the head is preferably, but not necessarily, mounted, preferably, but not necessarily, reclaims injectate and transports it to the low-pressure side of the air booster pump.

In order to improve performance of the Machine and minimize outgassing from the injectate, either the source of the injectate is pressurized or a pump is inserted between the source and the air booster pump.

Preferably, but not necessarily, a main injectate filter is located between the source of the injectate and the air booster pump; and, preferably, but not necessarily, the design of the Machine permits this main injectate filter can be replaced while the Machine is operating.

A cleaning aperture is preferably, but not necessarily, located in each end of the head.

A conveyor belt is preferably, but not necessarily, in a work surface to which the head or heads are, preferably, but not necessarily, mounted and has an endless belt containing apertures

1 so that the head or heads can be mounted either above or below the conveyor belt. The conveyor
2 belt is preferably, but not necessarily, one which may operate at different speeds.

3 Ozone may be added by the Machine to the injectate or applied to the subject of the
4 injection.

5 And a computer device preferably, but not necessarily, controls many of the components
6 and functions of the Machine.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 represents in schematic form the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment with no reservoir and no recycling of injectate.

Figure 2 represents in schematic form the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment with one reservoir but no recycling of injectate.

Figure 3 represents in schematic form the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment with one reservoir and recycling of injectate.

Figure 4 represents in schematic form the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment with two reservoirs and recycling of injectate.

Figure 5 represents in schematic form the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment with the capability of adding ozone to the injectate.

Figure 6 shows the exterior of the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment having a drain.

Figure 7 illustrates the exterior of the Machine for Injecting Liquids in an embodiment having a catch basin in conjunction with the drain.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

1
2 The present invention is a needleless injection apparatus³⁰ that utilizes one or more
3 commercially available air booster pumps³² which employs relatively low-pressure compressed air
4 (typically less than 150 psi) to generate an output pressure sufficiently intense to propel injectate
5 efficiently and without imparting any substantial heat to the injectate. Rather than operating
6 continuously to maintain a desired pressure, the air booster pump³² stops once that pressure has
7 been attained. Each air booster pump³² is connected to one or more heads³⁴. And preferably, but
8 not necessarily, control valve³⁶ in a feed line³⁸ going from the high-pressure side⁴⁰ of the air booster
9 pump³² to one or more heads³⁴ opens to allow injectate on the high-pressure side⁴⁰ of the air booster
10 pump³² to flow through the nozzle or nozzles⁴² of the one or more heads³⁴. When this occurs, the
11 pressure is lowered, and the air booster pump³² operates only long enough to re-establish the
12 desired pressure.

13 Preferably, but not necessarily, the control valve³⁶ is capable of directing injectate from the
14 air booster pump³² to the specific head or heads³⁴ which a user wishes to provide injection;
15 alternately, however, a separate valve is located between the air booster pump³² and each head³⁴
16 supplied with injectate by that air booster pump³² so that a user may determine which heads³⁴ will
17 be used for injection.

18 Alternatively, in lieu of either the control valve³⁶ or the separate valve between the air
19 booster pump³² and each head³⁴ supplied with injectate by that air booster pump³², a separate pilot
20 valve activates, deactivates, and controls the pressure provided by a given air booster pump³².

21 The air booster pump³² holds only a small quantity of injectate and preferably, but not
22 necessarily, receives such injectate from a nearby supply reservoir⁴⁶, minimizing the total quantity
23 of injectate that must be within the machine.

24 Each head³⁴, itself, has a number of unique features.

25 The head³⁴ is a hollow body having apertures⁴⁸ near the bottom into which one or more
26 nozzles⁴² may be releasably connected. Each nozzle⁴² has an input end and an output end.
27 Preferably, but not necessarily, the input end lies within the head³⁴ at a point with enough distance
28 to the interior of the wall of the head³⁴ that any particles that may be within the injectate will tend
29 to fall to a level below the input end of the nozzle⁴² and, therefore, be unlikely to enter and clog
30 the nozzle.⁴²

1 The interior diameter of the nozzles⁴² is preferably, but not necessarily, selected to be such
2 that surface tension of a liquid injectate will preclude the injectate from passing through a nozzle⁴²
3 unless the air booster pump³² has pressurized the injectate above atmospheric pressure. This
4 diameter is preferably less than .025 inch.

5 Within the head³⁴ is, preferably, but not necessarily, located a hollow tube⁵² which
6 communicates with the feed line³⁸ from the air booster pump³² so that any injectate entering the
7 head³⁴ must do so through the tube⁵². Multiple apertures exist in the wall of the tube⁵² that is
8 perpendicular to the longitudinal access of the tube⁵²; preferably there is an aperture in the vicinity
9 of each nozzle⁴² in order to tend to equalize the pressure of the injectate at each nozzle⁴².
10 Introduction of the injectate into a head³⁴ at multiple locations, rather than from a single location,
11 tends to increase turbulence within the injectate inside the head³⁴ and, therefore, to minimize the
12 tendency of any particles within the injectate to accumulate and block a nozzle⁴².

13 Again preferably, but not necessarily, a filter is located between the feed line³⁸ and any
14 nozzle⁴² associated with that head³⁴. When the hollow tube⁵² is employed, such hollow tube⁵²
15 communicates with such aperture and the hollow tube⁵², preferably, but not necessarily, has, as
16 the filter, a screen which removably surrounds the wall of the hollow tube⁵² that is parallel to the
17 longitudinal access of the hollow tube⁵².

18 The head³⁴ is preferably, but not necessarily, designed so that upon installation one point of
19 the inside of the head³⁴ will be at substantially the highest elevation. Near such point the head³⁴ has
20 an escape aperture⁶⁰ so that any gas within the injectate that enters the head³⁴ will tend to flow to
21 and through such escape aperture⁶⁰. Removal of gas from the injectate within the head³⁴ is
22 important because, although liquid injectate is essentially incompressible, gas can be
23 compressed; so, when the air booster pump³² stops, injectate would not be forced through any
24 nozzle⁴² by the air booster pump³² but would be by any entrapped, expanding compressed gas.

25 A return line⁶² is preferably, but not necessarily, attached to the escape aperture⁶⁰ in order to
26 return any liquid injectate that is forced through the escape aperture⁶⁰ by entrapped, compressed
27 gas to the reservoir⁴⁶.

28 Preferably, but not necessarily, the feed line³⁸ and the return line⁶² are flexible in order to
29 facilitate moving the head or heads to alternate locations. The feed line³⁸ and the return line⁶² could,
30 however, be inflexible.

1 Preferably, but not necessarily, a valve³⁴ is located in the escape aperture³⁰ (or the return
2 line³⁰). This valve³⁴ may be a manually operated valve but is preferably an electronically actuated
3 valve.

4 Each head³⁴ is preferably, but not necessarily, mounted to a surface termed the "work
5 surface," which is preferably, but not necessarily, the top of a cabinet. Preferably, but not
6 necessarily, the mounting is such that the head³⁴ may be rotated about one or more axes and
7 preferably about three orthogonal axes. This is accomplished through any means that is well
8 known in the art, such as by securing the head with a clamp that can be opened and then closed
9 or loosened and then tightened. Additionally, it is preferable to have the height of the head
10 above the work surface³⁰ adjustable. Again, this is accomplished through any means that is well
11 known in the art, such as mounting the clamps on a bracket that can be raised or lowered, e.g.,
12 with a hydraulic cylinder or a rotatable screw.

13 When there are multiple, independently orientable heads³⁴, a variety of optional techniques
14 for injection exist. For example, injection can occur from multiple directions simultaneously or
15 in timed succession; the angle of entry for the injection from one or more heads³⁴ can be changed
16 simultaneously or in timed succession; offsetting forces of two or more injection heads³⁴ can be
17 utilized to stabilize the position of the subject of the injection, precluding or minimizing the
18 movement of the subject that can be caused when injection occurs from a single direction; and
19 the pattern of injection produced by the nozzles⁴² of different heads³⁴ can be overlapped to achieve a
20 higher injection density at one time than could be obtained by using just one head³⁴, because of
21 physical limitations dictating the space required between adjacent nozzles⁴².

22 The top of the work surface³⁰, which, as noted above, is preferably, but not necessarily, the
23 top of a cabinet, is preferably, but not necessarily, sloped to collect excess injectate and use
24 gravity to cause it to flow through a drain³⁸ and preferably, but not necessarily, a screen. The
25 screen can be upstream from the drain³⁸ or within the drain³⁸. Optionally, instead of just relying
26 upon gravity, a reclamation pump could be placed in or adjacent to, and in fluid communication
27 with, the drain³⁸. And the drain³⁸ optionally could include a catch basin into which injectate
28 reclaimed from the work surface³⁰ would first flow.

1 There exist a variety of options for providing injectate to the air booster pump.³² Of
2 course, a source⁴⁴ of injectate is connected to and in fluid communication with the input side⁴⁰ of the
3 air booster pump.³²

4 Preferably, but not necessarily, a filter³² designated the main injectate filter is located
5 between the source of injectate⁴⁴ and the air booster pump³², especially if pre-filtered injectate is not
6 used.

7 If it is not desired to have a return line⁶² from the head³⁴ and if it is not desired to reclaim
8 injectate from the work surface⁶⁰, either a container in which the injectate is delivered or a
9 reservoir⁴⁶ into which the injectate is placed can serve as the source⁴⁴ of injectate. Gravity can cause
10 the injectate to flow from the source to the air booster pump³². Preferably, but not necessarily,
11 however, either the source is pressurized, by any means³⁴ that is well known in the art, with gas to
12 cause the injectate to flow or a pump³⁶ is inserted between the source and the air booster pump³².
13 This improves performance of the Machine for Injecting Liquids³⁰ and tends to preclude
14 outgassing from the injectate which is caused when the air booster pump³², in the absence of a
15 pressurized source³⁴ or a pump³⁶ between the source and the air booster pump³², creates a vacuum on
16 its low-pressure side.³⁰

17 When a pump³⁶ is inserted between the source and the air booster pump³² and when there is
18 a return line⁶² or a drain⁶⁸ from the work surface⁶⁰ or both the return line⁶² and the drain⁶⁸, it is preferable,
19 but not necessary, to have the return line⁶² and the drain⁶⁸ flow into the container or the reservoir⁴⁶,
20 whichever serves as the source.⁴⁴ In this case, were the source pressurized, check valves could be
21 employed in the return line⁶² and the drain line⁶⁸, in any manner that is well known in the art; but the
22 reclamation pump would have to provide flow from the drain line⁶⁸. And, as a further alternative
23 when the reclamation pump stimulates flow from the drain line⁶⁸, a line from the source could
24 combine with the ~~return~~^{return} line⁶² and the drain line⁶⁸ utilizing check valves in any manner that is well
25 known in the art with the combined line proceeding to the pump³⁶ between the source and the air
26 booster³² if such a pump³⁶ is employed and otherwise going to the low-pressure side³⁰ of the air
27 booster pump³².

28 It is further preferable, but not necessary, to have the ability to remove the main injectate
29 filter³² while the Machine³⁰ is still operating. This would permit the main injectate filter³² to be
30 cleaned or replaced without interfering with production.

1 One example of a structure for accomplishing this is to have a line⁸⁶ from the source that
2 branches into two parallel lines, each having a main injectate filter⁷². A valve at the point of
3 branching or on-off valves⁸² in each parallel line prior to the main injectate filter⁷² select which
4 parallel line will operate. The parallel lines could rejoin prior to or upon entering any pump. An
5 alternate exemplary structure has an auxiliary reservoir⁸⁴ located downstream from the main
6 injectate filter⁷² prior to any pump. This permits the main injectate filter⁷² to be removed when there
7 is no injectate in the first reservoir⁴⁶ while sufficient injectate remains in the second reservoir⁹⁴ to
8 supply the needs of the Machine³⁰ at least for the time that is required to replace the main injectate
9 filter⁷².

10 Each head³⁴, preferably, but not necessarily, has a first end⁸⁶ and a second end⁸⁸ as well as an
11 aperture⁹⁰ designated the "cleaning aperture," which is preferably, but not necessarily, located in
12 either the first end⁸⁶ or the second end⁸⁸ of the head³⁴ or, most preferably, both ends^{86 and 88} of the head³⁴. As
13 its name implies, the cleaning aperture⁹⁰ facilitates cleaning of the head³⁴. A brush, a high-pressure
14 flush, or a spray may be introduced to the inside of the head³⁴ through the cleaning aperture⁹⁰. The
15 cleaning aperture⁹⁰ is closed preferably, but not necessarily, with a valve located within the
16 cleaning aperture⁹⁰. Optionally, a cap designated the "end cap" is removably attached to the head³⁴
17 over the cleaning aperture⁹⁰. This may be done in any manner that is well known in the art, such
18 as by having mating threads in the cleaning aperture⁹⁰ and on the end cap.

19 Within or adjacent to the top of the work surface⁶⁶ is, preferably, but not necessarily,
20 located an endless-belt conveyor⁹⁴. The conveyor⁹⁴ moves subjects near the head or heads³⁴ so that
21 such subjects can be injected. Preferably, but not necessarily, the belt⁹⁶ of the conveyor contains
22 apertures⁹⁸ so that a head or heads³⁴ can even be mounted below the belt⁹⁶ as well as above or
23 substantially even with the belt⁹⁶.

24 Preferably, but not necessarily, the speed of the conveyor⁹⁴ is variable; movement of the
25 conveyor⁹⁴ can be continuous or incremental; and the conveyor⁹⁴ employs electronic braking to
26 insure that the conveyor⁹⁴ is stopped rapidly and completely when desired.

27 Although the Machine³⁰ can be operated manually, it preferably, but not necessarily,
28 includes a computer device such as a programmable logic controller.

29 The computer device, thus, preferably utilizes programmable microprocessors and
30 includes the traditional features of a computer, such as a memory.

1 The length of the injection burst, injection pressure, and the delay between bursts can be
2 programmed into the computer device by a user, although optional default settings can be placed
3 into the computer device at the factory. The computer device is preferably, but not necessarily,
4 capable of storing multiple programs that can be used when desired. Preferably, but not
5 necessarily, the length of the injection burst can be varied from no injection to a continuous
6 injection.

7 The computer device, furthermore, is preferably, but not necessarily, capable of
8 controlling the movement of the conveyor⁹⁴ and synchronizing such movement with the injection
9 burst in order to select the desired effect of the injection. For example, the computer device can,
10 preferably, but not necessarily, cause injection to occur only when the conveyor⁹⁴ is stopped and
11 thereby create virtually unnoticeable points of entry for the injectate into the subject⁹⁴; or,
12 alternatively, the computer device can cause injection to transpire while the conveyor⁹⁴ is moving
13 to create a slit in the subject that will result in mechanical tenderizing when the subject is
14 material such as meat.

15 Optionally, the computer device may also be interfaced with various sensors, such as a
16 sensor that detects the thickness of the subject. A program in the computer device then adjusts
17 one or more injection parameters to accomplish a pre-selected goal with regard to the subject,
18 e.g., attainment of a selected concentration of injectate within the subject.

19 Additionally, all valves in the Machine, including but not limited to, the valve in the
20 cleaning aperture⁴⁰ and the valve in the escape aperture⁶⁰ can preferably, but not necessarily, be
21 controlled by the computer device. When this is done for the valve in the escape aperture⁶⁰, the
22 computer device is preferably, but not necessarily, programmed to open the valve in the escape
23 aperture⁶⁰ for a specified duration after a specified number of injections. Experience with the
24 Machine³⁰ will enable a user successfully to predict the rate of accumulation of gas and, therefore,
25 the number of injections after which the valve in the escape aperture⁶⁰ should be opened as well as
26 the duration for such opening, although again default settings can be placed into the computer at
27 the factory. Alternatively, the computer device can be programmed with algorithms based upon
28 formulae that are well known in the art to calculate the theoretical pressure anywhere on the
29 high-pressure side⁴⁰ of the air booster pump³², e.g., in the feed line³⁸. A pressure sensor then
30 measures the actual pressure. The computer device is programmed to compare the actual and

1 theoretical pressures. Since air within the portions of the Machine³⁰ that are in fluid
2 communication on the high-pressure side⁴⁰ of the air booster pump³² is generally responsible for the
3 actual pressure being lower than the theoretical pressure, the computer device is programmed
4 with a range below the theoretical pressure within which the actual pressure must be. The
5 computer device is further programmed to actuate, i.e., open, the valve in the escape aperture⁴⁰ one
6 or more times until the actual pressure has risen so that it is above the lower limit of the
7 acceptable pressure range. And in a still further option when the electronically actuated valve is
8 employed in the escape aperture⁴⁰, a sensor is located in the head³⁴ near or, preferably, in the escape
9 aperture⁴⁰. This sensor may be any sensor that is capable of distinguishing between liquid and gas,
10 such as an optical sensor or a pressure sensor. The sensor is connected to the electronically
11 actuated valve and causes the electronically actuated valve to be in the open position whenever
12 gas is detected by the sensor.

13 Also, when there are multiple heads³⁴, some or all of the parameters can, preferably, but
14 not necessarily, be varied independently for each head³⁴. This may be done with or without a
15 computer device, but it is more practical to employ a computer device for such purpose.

16 Preferably, but not necessarily, input by the user to the computer device is accomplished
17 with a sealed touch panel because this can withstand a wet environment. Any other input device
18 that can withstand a moist environment is also acceptable. And any input device known in the
19 art could be used if kept a sufficient distance from the moist environment associated with the
20 Machine.

21 Preferably, but not necessarily, the mounting of each head³⁴ is accomplished with gears³⁴
22 and motors that are well known in the art so that each head³⁴ is moved in three axes as well as
23 raised and lowered using the motors and gears. Such motors and gears are preferably, but not
24 necessarily sealed as are their connections to power, using any technique that is well known in
25 the art, so that they will not be impaired by a moist environment. Also preferably, but not
26 necessarily, using any technique that is well known in the art, such as wires, radio frequency
27 communication, or infrared communication, such motors and gears are remotely controllable.
28 As is well known in the art, this can be done directly through the input device, preferably, but not
29 necessarily, a touch panel or through an input device and the computer.

1 All features of the Machine except the work surface³⁰, the heads⁶⁶, the motors and gears, and
2 the lines are preferably, but not necessarily, contained within a sealed cabinet¹⁰⁰. Moreover, as
3 discussed above, the work surface⁶⁶ is preferably, but not necessarily, the top of a cabinet; and, in
4 the preferred embodiment, this would be the sealed cabinet.¹⁰⁰

5 Anything which enters the sealed cabinet¹⁰⁰, e.g., wires or lines, such as a line to fill an
6 non-pressurized reservoir, preferably, but not necessarily, enter through apertures which are
7 sealed, preferably, but not necessarily, with rubber gaskets. For maintenance, one or more doors¹⁰²
8 preferably, but not necessarily, exist in the outer surface of the cabinet¹⁰⁰, but these doors¹⁰² and the
9 sealed cabinet¹⁰⁰ incorporate a seal, preferably, but not necessarily one or more gaskets, around the
10 opening or openings formed when the door¹⁰² is not closed.

11 Optionally, in order to minimize the presence of microorganisms in the injectate, a source
12 of ozone¹⁰⁴ is connected to a non-pressurized reservoir in any manner that is well known in the art.
13 The ozone¹⁰⁴ is then allowed to bubble through the injectate in such reservoir. This may, for
14 example, be accomplished by connecting the source of ozone¹⁰⁴ through a pressure regulator and
15 valve to the reservoir near the bottom of such reservoir. And, as indicated above, this valve and,
16 indeed, every valve associated with the Machine³⁰ are, preferably, but not necessarily controlled
17 by the computer device.

18 Because the introduction of ozone¹⁰⁴ is somewhat consumptive of time, it is preferable, but
19 not necessary, to have a non-pressurized reservoir in each of two parallel lines and to have one or
20 more valves control which reservoir is receiving ozone and which is being used to supply
21 injectate. This is done in a similar fashion as discussed above for the use of two main injectate
22 filters.

23 Also, as discussed with respect to the main injectate filter, the two reservoirs could be in
24 series with the upstream reservoir being used for introduction of ozone¹⁰⁴ into the injectate while
25 the downstream reservoir supplies the operational needs of the Machine for injectate.

26 Similarly, the subject of injection is preferably, but not necessarily, treated with ozone¹⁰⁴
27 prior to injection. In the same manner as described above for the injectate, ozone¹⁰⁴ is bubbled
28 through a water reservoir containing water. Then there are three options. The subject can be
29 passed through the water reservoir, the water containing ozone can be transferred by any method
30 that is well known in the art to a holding reservoir through which the subject is passed, or the

1 water containing ozone can be sprayed on the subject by any method that is well known in the
2 art.

3 Preferably, but not necessarily, any portion of the Machine³⁰ that will contact either the
4 subject or the injectate must meet the food grade specifications that are well known in the art.

5 Also preferably, but not necessarily, a removable safety shield¹⁰⁶ covers the working surface⁴²
6 and heads³⁴ to such an extent that a user cannot touch the nozzle⁴² or the stream of injectate.

7 Preferably, but not necessarily, this safety shield¹⁰⁶ is transparent. And preferably, but not
8 necessarily, sensors or interlocks, in any manner that is well known in the art, determine when
9 the safety shield¹⁰⁶ has been installed and preclude the Machine³⁰ from injecting whenever the safety
10 shield¹⁰⁶ has not been installed.

11

CLAIMS

We claim:

1. A machine for injecting liquids, which comprises:
an air booster pump adapted to receive injectate; and
a head having apertures for nozzles, said head being in fluid communication with
said air booster pump.

ABSTRACT

1
2 A machine for injecting liquids. An air booster pump is adapted to receive injectate. The
3 air booster pump is in fluid communication with one or more heads having apertures for nozzles.
4 A hollow tube is preferably, but not necessarily, located within each head and is in fluid
5 communication with the air booster pump. Injectate flows from the air booster pump into the
6 head, preferably through the apertures in the wall of the hollow tube. Preferably, but not
7 necessarily, the head is designed so that upon installation one point of the inside of the head will
8 be at the highest elevation. Near such point the head has an escape aperture so that any gas
9 within the injectate that enters the head will tend to flow to and through such escape aperture.
10 Furthermore, a return line preferably, but not necessarily, takes injectate that flows through the
11 escape aperture to the low-pressure side of the air booster pump. And also, a drain, in a work
12 surface to which the head is preferably, but not necessarily, mounted, preferably, but not
13 necessarily, reclaims injectate and transports it to the low-pressure side of the air booster pump.
14 Filters exist for the injectate; a main injectate filter can preferably be replaced while the Machine
15 is operating. And the Machine preferably includes a computer device for controlling its
16 components and operation.